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Housekeepers' Chat

Thursday,
U. S. June 21, 1928.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Care of Foods in the Summer Time." Program includes answers to timely questions; a menu, and recipes. Approved by Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Bulletins available: "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes."

--ooOoo--

The time of year is approaching when the careless, lackadaisical housewife becomes depressed and discontented whenever she prepares a meal in her kitchen.

"Just taste that milk!" she exclaims. "It's sour already. The butter is rancid, too, and the meat I bought last night is beginning to spoil."

Then she opens the bread box, and groans aloud: "Look at the mold on that bread! I declare, it's enough to drive me distracted, the way food spoils in the summer time."

It's too bad, because the food we eat costs a great deal of money, and it costs labor, and time. It's wasteful to let food lose its attractive flavor or appearance; moreover, spoiled or infected food may be dangerous to health, or even to life.

This morning I shall discuss the care of food in the summer time. For convenience, I have divided the common kinds of food into several classes.

First, we'll consider milk, and other dairy products. If you buy milk from a dairy, keep it in the bottle until used. Bring the bottles in as soon as possible after the milk is delivered, and wash them, giving especial attention to the mouth of the bottle, and the cap. Keep the bottles in the refrigerator, or other storage place, where the temperature is 50 degrees Fahrenheit, or preferably, less than 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Always put the most perishable foods, such as milk and meat, in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Even a temporary rise in the temperature of milk aids the development of bacteria.

Butter should be kept in a covered dish that keeps out light, and prevents absorption of foreign flavors. Creamery print butter keeps well in the original cartons. If you buy several pounds of butter, in bulk, rinse it off with cold water, to remove any drops of buttermilk, then wrap the butter in several thicknesses of cheesecloth, which has been wet in weak brine.

Cheese is another dairy product we must consider. Any kind of cheese is apt to become moldy, but it can be protected somewhat by keeping it cool, and well wrapped in waxed paper. Soft cheeses should be left in their original containers, until used.

Meats, poultry, and fish, should be kept cold, clean and dry. Meat should be unwrapped as soon as it is brought from the market, and placed in a clean, dry, covered dish, in the refrigerator or cold storage room. Meat should never be washed, until just before it is cooked. Washing draws the juice from meat, and makes it spoil more quickly. Edible organs, such as liver, sweetbreads, and brains, should be used promptly, because they spoil more quickly than other cuts of meat.

Fish loses its fresh flavor, and spoils even more quickly than most meats. It should be kept in a very tightly covered dish in the refrigerator, because the flavor of fish is apt to be absorbed by other foods.

Keep eggs in a covered container, in a dry, clean place, where the temperature is not above 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Eggs should be washed, but not until just before using, because water removes the protective film on the shell.

All fruits and vegetables that are to be eaten raw, should be thoroughly washed, for even though they look clean, dangerous bacteria may cling to skins or leaves. In washing fruits and vegetables, it is better to lift them from the water, rather than to drain the water off. Washing them in running water is perhaps the best method.

Left-over cooked foods need special care in the summer. Moist cooked foods, particularly those made with milk, eggs, meat, or fish, are excellent breeding places for harmful micro-organisms, including those that cause serious poisoning, without making the food smell or taste spoiled. Left-overs of meat pies, dishes made with cream sauce, gravies, custards, boiled or cream salad dressing, must be carefully handled and should be used promptly. In general, left-over foods should be transferred promptly from the dishes in which they were served to separate, clean, dry, covered dishes, chilled as quickly as possible, and kept in the cold storeroom or refrigerator. In hot weather, especially, left-overs should be boiled or thoroughly heated, before being served again. Never take a chance with left-over cooked foods that may be spoiled. Sometimes dangerous poisons develop in such foods, without making noticeable changes in taste or smell.

Fats and fat foods, such as nut meats and chocolate, should be kept cool, in covered, light-proof containers, so they won't turn rancid.

Bread, cake, pies, cookies, and so forth, after they are taken from the oven, should be cooled rapidly, and then stored in a well-scalded tin box, or other suitable covered receptacle. Do not wrap hot bread in a cloth. Wrapping hot bread in a cloth tends to injure the flavor, and spoils the crisp crust. Bread is an ideal place for the growth of molds; therefore, the bread box should be scalded and aired, at least once a week, and should not be shut up airtight, especially in hot, humid weather, when it is filled with fresh bread.

Canned goods--jellies, jams, and so on--should be kept in a clean, dry,

R-H.C. 6/21

cool, closet or storeroom. It is well to have canned goods on narrow shelves, so that the supply can be looked over easily, and any spoiled food quickly detected. If canned goods must be stored in the kitchen cupboard, they should be placed on the lower shelves, where they will be least exposed to heat and steam.

There are two questions to answer, before you write the menu, and recipes. The first question is from a listener who wants to know how to make pie crust which will not shrink from the sides of the pie pan.

Answer: When you line your pie tin with pastry dough, allow the pastry to extend well over the edge of the pan. Pinch it down with the back of a fork, or with the fingers, and prick the dough all over the bottom of the pan with a fork. Bake the crust in a quick oven. This method should prevent the pastry from shrinking, and leaving the sides of the pan.

Second question: "Can you tell me how to cook summer squash so that my three-year-old son will eat it?"

Answer: For young children, from three to four years old, the seeds and rind of summer squash should be cut off and discarded. Then dice the fleshy part remaining and simmer until tender, in lightly salted water. This should take only about 15 minutes, for young, tender, squash. It may then be served in diced form, or mashed. Season with melted butter, or cream. Summer squash cooked in this way is delicately green and attractive looking, and I think your small son will enjoy eating it.

Before I broadcast the menu, let me read you this letter from a man who signs himself "Disillusioned."

"Dear Aunt Sammy: I am a June groom, married on the first of the month. My wife and I were very happy, and all went merry as a marriage bell, until I discovered that the Most-Wonderful-Girl-in-the-World doesn't know beans, about cooking. I don't know why I didn't think of this before we were married, but it skipped my mind. Only the other day, Aunt Sammy, I found my wife in tears, because, she said, the grocer had cheated her. 'I ordered Irish potatoes,' sobbed my wife, (and the mean old thing sent me potatoes which were grown in Michigan.' Well, my disillusionment began right then. The next morning, when I suggested that I'd like to have Meat Loaf for dinner, and a good old-fashioned Cherry Dumpling for dessert, the Most-Wonderful-Girl-in-the-World looked blank. 'I never made a meat loaf,' she wailed, 'and I don't know how to make the soup for cherry dumplings.' Now, Aunt Sammy, I'm not expecting you to teach my wife to cook, by radio, but if you have any cookbooks which are written in plain practical English, I wish you'd please send one to my wife."

That's all of the disillusioned man's letter. I sent his wife a radio cookbook, and a few extra bulletins, and I showed his letter to the Menu Specialist. Said she, "If his heart is set on Meat Loaf, and Cherry Dumplings, we must plan a menu for him. I'm quite sure," added the Menu Specialist, "that the right kind of a Meat Loaf, and a fat Cherry Dumpling, with whipped cream, will make him happy and contented." So saying, the Menu Specialist planned this menu: Meat Loaf; Asparagus on Toast; Summer Turnips; and Cherry Dumplings.

For the Meat Loaf, nine ingredients are necessary:

2 pounds ground beef
1/2 pound ground pork
1 onion, grated
1 cup thick cream sauce or gravy, or 2 eggs
1 cup dry bread crumbs
1 to 2 cups canned tomato
Salt
Pepper, and
Celery tops

Count the ingredients, please: (Repeat)

(Read slowly). Mix all the ingredients together, thoroughly. Then shape the mixture into a loaf, place a strip or two of salt pork, or small pieces of suet, on top, and place in a heavy baking pan. Bake for 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 hours. The oven should be hot at first. Reduce the temperature toward the end. If you use sauce or gravy as a binder for the loaf, make it with three tablespoons flour, and two tablespoons butter, or other fat, to one cup of liquid. Perhaps I'd better repeat that: (Repeat)

The next dish is Asparagus on Toast. Asparagus should always be cooked as soon as possible after it is cut. The pieces may be left whole, or cut up into inch lengths. Use slightly salted boiling water (as little water as necessary), and cook for not longer than 20 or 25 minutes. Young, tender stalks may be done in 10 to 15 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, butter and a little cream. Let stand in a warm place, for a few minutes, and then serve, either alone, or on toast. It's a good idea to save the water in which the asparagus was cooked, for soup or sauces.

Now let's do the Baked Cherry Dumplings. First, make a good pastry. Roll it into a thin sheet. Next, cut it into squares, big enough to fit the bottom, and up the sides, of muffin tins. Then fill the pastry cups with fresh pitted, sweetened cherries. Dot with butter, and fold over the points of pastry. Bake in a medium oven, so that the fruit will cook before the pastry browns. Serve the dumplings hot with hard or liquid sauce, or cold with plain or whipped cream. This same recipe for dumplings can be used with gooseberries, apples, peaches, or other sweetened summer fruits.

To repeat the menu: Meat Loaf; Asparagus on Toast; Summer Turnips; and Cherry Dumplings.

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